

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF100/05
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ENGINEERING CENTER
ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, MARYLAND 21010-8423

July 27, 1992

-- Historical Office

Mr. Joseph A. Kawecky, Investigator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
77 W. Jackson
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Dear Mr. Kawecky:

This is in response to your request regarding the Skinner Landfill site in West Chester, Ohio.

The records of this office have been checked for information regarding the Skinner Landfill, the Sharonville Ordnance Depot and the Kings Mill Ordnance Plant. There is nothing in the files of this office to indicate that the Chemical Warfare Service/Chemical Corps was in any way involved with any of these sites.

We have no information in this office about the Sharonville Depot. There is a reference to the Kings Mill Ordnance Plant in a volume of the published historical series, "U.S. Army in World War II"; it appears in the volume entitled "The Ordnance Department. Procurement and Supply."

To explain further, the sites of manufacture of military chemical warfare agents are listed in our files and do not include any place near the Skinner Landfill; nor is it near any known former chemical agent filling plant. As to movement/storage, we know that movement of toxic agent such as mustard agent or nerve agent was controlled. In fact, that was the basis for the creation of the Technical Escort Unit, first known as the Guard and Security Unit. A movement history of chemical weapons compiled in 1987 for the 1946-1986 time frame lists nothing that could be attributed to the landfill site.

You had mentioned that Mr. Skinner's son recalls his father bringing home bombs from the Sharonville Depot, removing the explosive from them for use in his well-drilling operation, and then burning the bomb. It was not uncommon for bomb bodies to be used for salvage, but they were to be demilitarized first. (It sounds as if this was possibly a self-help initiative on Mr. Skinner's part.) As stated, we do not have details on the contents of the Sharonville Depot as it was not a chemical depot. Whether or not white phosphorus (WP) shells/bombs or incendiary munitions were stored there in the post World War II era can not be determined from our records.

The only mention of the Skinner Landfill Site is in a trip report contained in the files of the U.S. Army Technical Escort Unit. The report, dated May 24, 1976, recounts the U.S. Army Technical Escort Unit's visit to the site in May 1976.

The Department of the Army requested the U.S. Army Technical Escort Center located at Edgewood, Maryland send a Chemical/Explosive Ordnance Assessment Team to West Chester, Ohio in May 1976. The purpose of the visit was to support the state and federal EPA in assessing the size of the problem and assisting in planning actions to alleviate the problem. (The seven member team was headed by Major Carl V. Glover who recently retired from the Army.

The landowner had refused the state EPA officials admittance and warned them that there may be buried on the location nerve gas, mustard gas, cyanide gas, white phosphorus, and incendiary and explosive devices. (That is why the Army was asked to assist.) However, on May 10, 1976, a meeting was held with those present being Mr. Skinner and his legal counsel, U.S. EPA officials and Major Glover. Following that meeting, Major Glover met with Mr. Skinner and his legal counsel to discuss the contents of the landfill. From this meeting, it was learned that the chemicals buried at the land fill were not the toxic chemicals listed in the preliminary report, but rather, commercial chemicals used by the Public Health Service and disposed of several years earlier. Also some explosives had been disposed at the site by detonation or burning. Plus a variety of industrial chemical wastes had been disposed of on this site.

On May 11, 1976, a search warrant was used to gain entry to the site and the Technical Escort team surveyed the entire area for any signs of toxic chemicals, military hardware, or explosive devices. The leader of the Technical Escort team also flew over the area in case something could be discerned from the air.

The team set up M8 Chemical Alarms for detection of chemical agent; but there was no indication of agent being present. Therefore, the state and federal EPA officials and a contractor with bulldozing equipment proceeded onto the site. After excavating about thirty feet down in the landfill, a chemical lagoon was found. No military chemicals/munitions were detected in the lagoon or elsewhere on the site.

Sincerely,

Frances Martin

Frances Martin
Historian, CREDC
Historical Office

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